

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA:ARDAY:LD

APPROVED BY P:PHABIB

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT FLASH

AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS FOR AMBASSADORS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR, LE, SY, SA, EG, US

SUBJECT: BEIRUT EVACUATION

1. FOR BEIRUT: YOU SHOULD INFORM THE PLO, THROUGH EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR AND YOUR SECURITY CHANNEL, THAT WE INTEND TO USE A LAND CONVOY AS THE PRINCIPAL MEANS OF EVACUATION ON TUESDAY. YOU SHOULD CONFIRM THEIR COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE. WE WANT TO KEEP OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF USING THE AIRPORT AS A SECONDARY MEANS. IN GIVING THEM THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE YOU EXPECT TO DEPART, YOU SHOULD SAY THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY IF NOT ALL WILL GO BY ROAD AND WE WILL GET THEM PRECISE INFORMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

2. FYI: THE ROAD CONVOY SEEMS SUFFICIENTLY FEASIBLE AND SECURE THAT WE HAVE DEFINITELY DECIDED TO USE THAT ROUTE.

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WE ARE ALSO CONTINUING TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF

GETTING A PLANE INTO THE AIRPORT TO LIFT YOU OUT, THOUGH WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS METHOD TO BE NECESSARILY SAFER THAN THE ROAD, AND PERHAPS LESS SAFE. FROM THE CONVERSATION THAT YOU HAVE REPORTED WITH THE ARAB LEAGUE FORCE COMMANDER, IT APPEARS THAT NO AIRCRAFT ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THAT CHANNEL AND THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO GO TO THE SYRIANS FOR A HELICOPTER IF WE WANTED ONE. WE DO NOT

WANT TO DO THIS AND UNDERSTAND YOU AGREE. THE ONLY FEASIBLE AIR OPTION APPEARS TO BE A CHARTERED TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT, WHICH WE ARE LOOKING INTO.

3. THE LKELIHOOD THAT YOU WILL BE COMING OUT BY ROAD MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT TO KEEP YOUR DEPARTURE SECRET. IMPLYING TO THE PLO THAT WE MAY BE SENDING SOME OUT BY AIR HAS THE ADDED ADVANTAGE OF CREATING UNCERTAINTY ABOUT YOUR MOVEMENTS EVEN IN THE MID,NDS OF THOSE WHO WOULD ASSUME THAT YOU ARE LEAVING THAT DAY.

4. YOU SHOULD PLAN TO RETURN DIRECTLY TO WASHINGTON. WE AGREE THAT THERE SHOULD BE EARLY CONTACT WITH THE MARONITE LEADERSHIP, BUT YOUR STOPPING AT JOUNIE WOULD INEVITABLY INCREASE THE SPECULATION THAT WE ARE SOMEHOW WORKING WITH THE SYRIANS AND CHRISTIANS IN PREPARATION FOR NEW MILITARY MOVES ON THEIR PART OR ARE AT LEAST KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THEM. IT WOULD ALSO EXPOSE YOU TO FURTHER RISK. OUR PRESENT THOUGHT IS TO HAVE NICK MURPHY TRAVEL TO JOUNIE AND SPEND A FEW DAYS IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS AFTER THE EVACUATION HAS BEEN COMPLETED. END FYI.

5. FOR CAIRO, DAMASCUS AND JIDDA: YOU SHOULD CONVEY TO THE RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS THE CHOICE WE HAVE MADE OF A ROAD CONVOY AS THE PRINCIPAL ROUTE, WHILE KEEPING OPEN THE OPTION OF THE AIRPORT AS A SECONDARY MEANS. WE ARE, OF COURSE, STILL MOST INTERESTED IN RECEIVING SAUDI COMMENTS AND WILL TAKE THEM INTO ACCOUNT IN OUR PLANNING.

6. DAMASCUS SHOULD ARRANGE WITH THE SYRIANS FOR GASOLINE RESUPPLY AT AS EARLY A STAGE IN THE ROUTE AS POSSIBLE,
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WORKING OUT DETAILS DIRECTLY WITH BEIRUT.

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